

CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. A telephone call announcement system comprising:
 - means for answering a phone call initiated by a calling party;
 - means for announcing a greeting to the calling party;
 - means for obtaining information about the calling party from a database;
 - means for announcing receipt of the call from the calling party to the called party,including means for announcing an identity of the calling party;
 - means for providing call answering options to called party and for receiving call answering instructions from the called party; and
 - means for completing the phone call according to the call answering instructions received from the called party.
2. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said means for announcing a greeting includes a voice response unit.
3. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 2, wherein said means for providing call answering options including at least the options to connect the phone call between the calling party and the called party, sending the calling party to a voice mail unit, or terminating the phone call.

4. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 2, wherein said menu for announcing a greeting further includes means for announcing to the calling party that the called party is a cellular telephone customer.

5. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 4, wherein the voice response unit includes means for providing an option to the calling party to accept the called party's cellular telephone usage charges.

6. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 5, wherein said means for providing call answering options includes at least the options to connect the phone call between the calling party and the called party, sending the calling party to a voice mail unit, or terminating the phone call.

7. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 5, wherein the voice response unit includes means for terminating the phone call if the calling party declines to accept the called party's cellular telephone usage charges.

8. The telephone call announcement system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said means for completing the phone call according to the call answering instructions include means for connecting the phone call, means for switching the calling party to a voice mail unit and means for disconnecting the calling party.

9. A method of answering a telephone call from a calling party to a called party, said method comprising the steps of:

using a call answering system to answer the telephone call from the calling party;
obtaining information about the calling party from a database, the information including identity of the calling party;
announcing the telephone call to the called party, including the identity of the calling party;
providing call answering options to the called party;
receiving call answering instructions from the called party; and
completing the telephone call according to the call answering instructions received from the called party.

10. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein said steps of using a call answering system to answer the telephone call includes the step of announcing a greeting to the calling party.

11. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein said step of providing call answering options further comprises providing first option to connect the call, providing a record option to send the calling party to a voice mail unit and providing an option to terminate the call.

12. The method as recited in Claim 9, wherein the step of announcing a greeting to the calling party further includes announcing to the calling party that the called party is a cellular telephone customer.

13. The method as recited in claim 12, further including the step of providing an option to the calling party to accept the called party's cellular telephone usage charge.

14. The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein said step of providing call answering options further comprises providing first option to connect the call, providing a record option to send the calling party to a voice mail unit and providing an option to terminate the call.

15. The method as recited in Claim 13, further including the step of terminating the telephone call if the calling party does not accept the called party's cellular telephone usage charges.

16. The method as recited in Claim 14, further including the step of terminating the telephone call if the calling party does not accept the called party's cellular telephone usage charges.